

COMING of AGE

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging



Birds Can Brighten Your Winter Yard

By Mary Houston

Watching birds is a fascinating and fun pastime which my husband Stuart and I have enjoyed together for 55 years. Even if you cannot go on hikes or drives, you can watch birds from your home as we do year-round. How? By setting out feeders and by making your yard – or your balcony, if you live in an apartment or condo – attractive to birds.

For example, you can attract a hairy woodpecker like this one photographed by Hans Dommasch to a handy tree by smearing melted peanut butter or fat on the bark. More ideas on page 3.

Survey shows readers like *Coming of Age*

We can't thank you enough.

Last fall, the Publication Committee surveyed readers to determine if *Coming of Age* is fulfilling its mandate of providing useful and timely information of interest to seniors in Saskatoon.

The committee distributed 200 surveys and got 116 back, and the results were positive. Almost 35% said *Coming of Age* was excellent; 64% said it was good.

The only suggestions for improvement called for more: more pages or more issues.

Almost three-quarters of the

116 people who received all three issues read them all. Just over 21% read two issues and 4.4% read one.

What readers liked most were stories about and by Saskatoon seniors. Other favourites were information on health, fitness, local activities for seniors, food/nutrition and Council news. Book reviews and travel articles were rated satisfactory, but there was little interest in articles about finances, housing, hobbies or entertainment.

Comments written on the

survey forms included: "Keep up the good work," "Excellent publication," "Presented at an appropriate level," "Very informative."

Suggestions for topics for future issues – such as humour (6), seniors' advocacy, changes in legislation concerning seniors, short trips in and out of Saskatoon, history, Saskatchewan travel and 'the good old days' – have been passed on to the editor.

The Publication Committee thanks everyone who responded to the survey, and is gratified that *Coming of Age* is enjoyed.

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President's Message

BY JEANETTE DEAN

PRESIDENT, SASKATOON COUNCIL ON AGING

Since we last spoke, the Council has had a very successful Spotlight on Seniors and a fun-filled Caregivers Forum on ways to cope with stress, and participated in the Centennial Showcase. The drop-in group continues to grow with its varied monthly meetings and outings, and a second session of Ski for Life will begin soon. Our monthly blood pressure clinic has a large clientele. We also had our first fundraising dinner and silent auction.

All these activities depend

for their success first on our hardworking staff and then on our invaluable volunteers. I want to begin 2007 by thanking every one of them for their efforts.

In November we welcomed our new police chief to our regular board meeting and explored ways of working together to make Saskatoon a safer place for seniors. The Task Force on Older Adult Abuse is working with various agencies to make the community aware of that problem. By building partnerships with others, whenever and wherever

possible, we hope to improve lives for seniors in Saskatoon in 2007.

We hope to make lives better for students at Bishop Klein School, too, by finding volunteers to knit hats, scarves and mittens. If you like to knit, please contact the office.

The Publication Committee's survey about *Coming of Age* gave it ideas for new articles and we hope you will enjoy them and news of Council activities throughout 2007. It should be a good year.

Jeanette

Task Force on Elder Abuse to Study Options for Frail, At-Risk, Low-Income Seniors

Because abuse of seniors is such a broad topic, the Council's Task Force on Older Adult Abuse has spread its efforts to raising awareness, studying legal and financial concerns, and the situation of older adults in care.

"There is a burgeoning population of seniors with intermediate care needs who fall between care offered by family and home care, and care needs of those in long-term care facilities. The needs of these people are often unmet, especially if they have limited financial means," Peggy MacLeod told the RESOLVE research day held in Saskatoon. RESOLVE – Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse – involves the seven universities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta.

Researchers share the findings from their various projects during such research days. Peggy as chair of the Task Force was reporting to the Community and Justice System section of the conference.

Since the Task Force was formed in March 2005, it has reviewed regulations governing personal care homes, the lack of financial assistance for residents, and the educational opportunities for staff. It found a lack of

information about:

- the residents of personal care homes
- their care needs.

The Task Force believes that communities and governments they elect are guilty of systemic abuse by neglecting to acknowledge and address this situation. It plans to focus on these issues, and has been or will be meeting with provincial politicians to discuss them.

- Jenni Mortin

Coming of Age

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Publication Committee:

Rita Ledingham, chair; Jeanette Dean, Michael Gillgannon, Mercedes Montgomery, Kamal Parmar, Eleanor Williams.

Editor: Jenni Mortin

Scanning: Michael Gillgannon

Visit the Council on line at www.scoa.ca

Attracting and Feeding Our Feathered Friends

By Mary Houston

I am happy to share things Stuart and I have learned about watching birds at our home, such as the blue jay and the chickadee on this page.

Place your feeding station within view of your window. It must be high enough to be safe from cats, and close enough to a hedge or trees to allow escape when birds are disturbed. Windowsill feeders provide easy observation.

There are many types of feeders. Elaborate feeders – and bird seed – can be purchased at garden and pet supply stores. A simple tray will do, but a roof is worth adding to help keep it free from snow in winter. Drill a 2.5-cm hole in a plastic bottle or a box with a screen at one end, and half-fill it with sunflower seeds; chickadees and nuthatches will enter. Suspend a chunk of suet or hard fat by a cord from a branch, for woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees. Smaller pieces of fat can be placed in a plastic mesh fruit or vegetable bag.

If you have a yard, fruit-bearing shrubs such as mountain ash and cotoneaster not only provide food for fruit eaters, but protective shelter as well. Evergreen trees attract the two crossbill species and pine siskins, while Manitoba maple and ash provide seeds for pine and evening grosbeaks. In our yard, the mountain ash berries delight the Bohemian waxwings and they, the robins and thrushes like the Schubert chokecherries.



Blue jay photo by Brent Terry

Food offerings include suet and “bird puddings” (made with melted fat mixed with peanut butter, seeds and crumbs), which can be placed on a tray or hung in a mesh bag. Black-oil sunflower seeds are a favourite with chickadees, blue jays and grosbeaks. House finches and redpolls favour smaller seeds: Siberian millet, niger or canola seed. Peanuts are a hit with magpies and blue jays, who will scream loudly when the supply is exhausted. (If you have peanut allergy in your family, they will also eat sunflower seeds, etc.) Don’t put out bread, unless you wish to attract house sparrows.

In summer, water is important and must be kept clean and fresh. Dripping water is particularly attractive to birds. We have a birdbath with a heater which keeps the water flowing all year round. If your feeder is on a table, it should have metal legs, so that cats and raccoons cannot climb up to the feed and the birds. So far I have not found a way to discourage the feeder bullies, the magpies – but I guess they need winter food, too.

For more information, or as a gift for a friend who feeds birds, send \$11, which includes postage, for *Winter Bird Feeding, an Alberta Guide* by Myrna Pearman (e-mail myrna@ellisbirdfarm.ab.ca) or write to Ellis Bird Farm, Box 5090, Lacombe AB T4W 1B7.



*Chickadee
photo
by
Stuart
Houston*

Mary Houston and her husband Stuart are well-known, experienced birdwatchers in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan

Doing It Right -- at 92

Many older adults have been heard to say "If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself!"

A dear friend and a fine gentleman, Bas Forsyth, had such an epiphany at the age of 40, and now, in his 92nd year, is reaping the benefits.

After 20 years of smoking, he noticed that stairs were getting difficult, and with the help of his supportive wife, Mina, he decided to stop smoking (which he did cold turkey!) and get into a sincere exercise regime. His parents had set an example of physical activity, and his own self-discipline and military training have encouraged him in a very busy life style.

Now, Bas says, attendance at the Field House three days a week is almost like a religion and he must go even when he doesn't really feel like it. It's a good reason to get up and going in the morning. He warms up for 10 minutes, walks for 30 minutes, uses all the weight machines for 30 minutes and then cools down and stretches for 20 minutes. The rest of his day goes better, "with vigor."

The social aspects of this program are a huge part of its importance to him. Bas meets and greets and has quick chats with many folks during his mornings there. When his beloved Mina died, his friends

surrounded and supported him, but his contacts at the Field House have also sustained him.

He quit skiing at 82 and just recently put his bike away, mainly because he didn't want to tempt fate after all the years of doing it safely.

He walks instead of driving, keeps up his strengthening exercises and, most importantly, has a very positive approach to life. Because of this, he is a joy to be around.

He is so interested in what is going on in his world. He says the three most important things in his life are friends and neighbours, community and the Field House. He attends symphonies, theatre and city events and travels for new experiences, usually going with a family member for more fun.



Exercising at the Field House is a good reason to get up in the morning, Bas Forsyth finds, and at 92, he is still reaping the benefits.

Usually with two books on the go at once, a limit of two hours or less of TV a day, a great interest in music, running his own home and preparing healthy meals, and caring for a cat "with an attitude," (another push to get him up early in the morning), he can't find enough hours in the day for everything he wants to do.

Bas feels that you must stand tall both mentally and physically. He makes a handsome picture of a man, always well-dressed and sharp as a tack. He confirms the old expression that "age truly is a state of mind."

For 50 years, he has taken better care of himself and it works. He is a shining example of how to live long and prosper, a man to admire and emulate.

Eleanor Williams is a member of the Publication Committee.

By
Eleanor Williams

FIGHT STRESS WITH LAUGHTER

By
Kamal Parmar



We take life too seriously, so we often feel down in the dumps or grumpy and want only to be left in peace. The world falls apart when the car runs out of fuel or a granddaughter decides to marry a punk!

There's a solution – laugh those worries away. Grab a book on jokes and you'll be grinning from ear to ear. You've learned to manage stress positively, with laughter therapy.



Most of us experience stress, which was first described in 1936 by Canadian physician Hans Selye. He found that it often leads to a 'fight or flight' response that causes wear and tear on the body. Positive stress adds zing to one's life, but negative stress leads invariably to disruption of normal functioning of the body organs, producing high blood pressure, migraine, depression, etc. Frequent stress can lead to chronic stress, the root cause of many illnesses that encourage early aging and lower our immune threshold.

We can counter stress with a well-balanced diet, enough sleep, alternative therapies such as aromatherapy, bio-feedback, social networking, music, meditation, exercise. However, laughter therapy is one of the

easiest, quickest ways to melt it away.

So let's start. Force your face into a smile, look cheerfully at the world and – it smiles back. Learn to see life's lighter side, to realize the glass is half-full, not half-empty. Perception is important, for it is how we perceive things, not what they actually are, that leads to stress.



Laughter recharges the battery of our mind and soul. A healthy mind leads to an ageless body. It is said that as you discover laughter, you will discover many more reasons to laugh and make others laugh with you – for laughter is always contagious.

Young children are said to laugh almost 100 times a day, while the average adult laughs only 15 times and has many days devoid of laughter due to worry. If we could laugh as much as children, we might all be centenarians. Jonathan Swift said the best doctors in the world were Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet and Dr. Merryman, and laughter is considered an elixir for staying young and healthy.

Laughter helps exercise the cardiovascular system by relaxing constricted blood vessels, thus lowering blood

pressure and heart rate. It tones the muscles and relaxes the skeletal system, and helps 'pop' us out of any emotional rut we're in. It helps replenish our creative juices and clear up dark thoughts that fog our minds. When we're in a pleasant mood, the brain produces endorphins that reduce pain and increase happiness.

Laughter heals by putting us in touch with our negative feelings, which it helps to release through cathartic action. This clears our mind and we analyze the situation from a better perspective. As we override our stress, we learn to take positive action.



Let's remember:

The most completely wasted day is one in which I have not laughed.

Sources:

C.R. Fenwick. *Love and Laughter: A Healing Journey* (2004).

C. R. Fenwick. *Healing with Humor* (1997).

*Kamal Parmar is a member of the
Publication Committee.*

Comparing Plasma and LCD TVs

*By
Michael
Gillgannon*

Space ran out in the last issue just as we were getting to a comparison of plasma and LCD high-definition, direct view TVs. There are also "projection" versions of each technology, which we are conveniently ignoring for now.

With direct view, each pixel (point of light) is either a plasma "bubble" or a liquid crystal. There are other HD technologies

such as DLP (digital light processor) but plasma and LCD are the front-runners.

I'm going to assume nobody cares HOW they work but, for the record, LCD stands for liquid crystal display, just like the display on many watches, only not really.

That ends the technical part of the discussion. Here's the important stuff:

1. Size. Plasma is king although LCD might be gaining. I say "might be" because they're both gaining. The biggest LCD direct view available for people who have yet to win the lottery is about 52 inches. Many plasma models exceed 60 inches.

2. Glare. If, like my big-brained friends, you watch TV in your basement, this isn't likely to be an issue, but if the TV is upstairs near windows it can be a significant problem. Plasma screens, being flat, are better than convex picture tubes at minimizing reflections, but otherwise they're not great. The polarized glass in front of LCD

screens puts them miles ahead in terms of glare reduction.

3. Refresh rate. This refers to how fast the image is redrawn and whether there are after-effects, such as a fast-moving hockey puck leaving a trail behind it. Plasma sets are better at this in general.

4. Weight. LCD TVs are quite a bit lighter while also being more robust.

5. Power consumption. LCD TVs use less power and run cooler.

6. Cost. Comparing similar screen sizes, plasma is cheaper, but as mentioned, a really big and affordable LCD screen is still a

work in progress.

7. Picture quality. Both are excellent with high-definition content. Curiously, HDTVs aren't all that great when displaying standard definition signals. They simply have too many pixels for their own good. And most standard broadcasts are still in the "sort of square" format, while HDTV shows are twice as wide as they are high. How does a square become a rectangle? Either by stretching it, enlarging it while cutting off the top and bottom, or by showing it in the right proportions with black bars on the sides. There is no perfect answer.

A word of caution: high-definition signals aren't free. Your friendly satellite or cable or phone service charges extra for HD channels and you will also have to buy or rent the appropriate set-top box (STB) to feed the TV.

By
Janet Barnes

in motion
Physical Activity - do it for life!

THE CHALLENGE OF AGING: INACTIVITY CAN LEAD TO FALLS

Did you know that 59% of adults 65 and older are inactive? That 40% of those 75 and over will fall at least once this year? Falls are the most common cause of injury and the sixth leading cause of death among older adults. Forty percent of people who are hospitalized have hip fractures, and half of long-term care admissions are related to falls. Women are two to three times more likely to fall than men, and 70% of falls occur in the person's home.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that you can do something so you don't add to these statistics. Physical activity will improve your health and decrease your fall risk. All you need to do is keep moving and be active four to five times a week for 30–60 minutes each time and include four essential elements in your physical activity plan: aerobic fitness, muscular fitness, flexibility, and stability and balance.

Aerobic exercise such as dancing, bicycling, fast walking, water aerobics and cross-country skiing helps your body use oxygen and is good for your heart and lungs.



Flexibility is your ability to move your joints through a full range of motion. It helps you to lift packages, pick things off the floor and tie your shoelaces. Try doing tai chi, yoga or stretching exercises.



Stability/balance is your body's core muscle strength and is the muscles in your lower back, pelvis, hips and abdomen. Improving in this area, through aquasize, tai chi, yoga, belly dancing and using an exercise ball, will help prevent falls.

Several physical activity programs are available in the community for adults 50 and better and can be found in the Physical Activity Guide available at the Centre. Check the City of Saskatoon Leisure Guide for Smart Start programs or supervised exercise programs for individuals with various health conditions.

If you live in seniors' congregate housing or in the community, you may be able to access a Forever...in motion program. Please call 655-7874 for more information and a list of sites.

Muscular fitness helps make your daily tasks and activities easier. You can improve your muscles' strength and endurance by weight training using free weights, machines and resistance bands.



Janet Barnes is Senior Recreation Therapist,
Older Adult Community, in motion

NO WONDER ALIENS CAN'T UNDERSTAND US

Judging by all the stories in the tabloids (*Bush Signs Pact With Space Aliens; Alien Donates Liver to Dying Man; Oprah Keeps Alien in Backyard Petting Zoo*), said aliens have more than a passing interest in this planet.

They are constantly flying around it; hovering beside jetliners, then zipping away at g-forces that would turn human beings into milkshakes; removing the organs of cattle; flattening crops with their flying teacups and abducting innocent humans for their nefarious mind-probing experiments. Those who survive eventually show up at the local newspaper office demanding an interview, where their answer to every single question is "I like cake."

Why do the aliens go to all that trouble — the flitting, the buzzing, the trampling? Why don't they save all that fuel (where do flying saucers gas up, by the way?) and set up a kiosk at West Edmonton Mall (The Biggest Shopping Centre In The World With The Possible Exception of Mall of America) and conduct mind probes of passing shoppers?

"I see that you are wearing a shirt with

printing on it that says 'Eddie Bauer.' Who is Eddie Bauer?"

"Eddie Bauer isn't a who. It's a company. A clothing company."

"Did this Eddie Bauer company give you that shirt?"

"No, I paid \$29.95 for it, if you must know."

"Does your livelihood depend upon this company in any way?"

"That would be a no."

"You do not own stock in the Eddie Bauer company?"

"It's just a clothing store, E.T. I mean pal."

"Then why do you display the name — Eddie Bauer — on your person? Do they pay you to wear their shirt?"

"They don't pay me. I paid them, remember?"

"By wearing a shirt that advertises Eddie Bauer, what are you telling people?"

"I guess I'm telling them that I didn't buy it from Wal-Mart — and that I'm cool."

"Interesting. I am going to pass this ray over your body now and rearrange your molecules into those of a pair of shoes. Have a nice day."

"Hey! Make sure they're Nikes!"

**Michael
Gillgannon**

Michael Gillgannon is a member of the Publication Committee.

DID YOU KNOW?

■ SGI's helpful booklet, *The Older and Wiser Driver*, is available at motor licence offices. It contains self-rating forms and suggestions for improvement.

■ CHEP operates mini-grocery stores in Saskatoon senior buildings, selling fruit, vegetables, some canned goods, baked goods and milk. The stores run for one hour, some weekly, some every second week. Every Thursday, the store is at Scott Forget, King Edward and Clinkskill. Every Friday, at McNaughton, Shephard and 5th Avenue Place. Every second Wednesday, McAskill, McClure Place and Oliver Place. Non-resident seniors are welcome. Find out the time at the building that interests you by calling 655-4575, e-mail karen@chep.org, or check at the building.